

## 9.19.06 - Rep. Rahall Announces \$2 Million Grant To Fund Mine Safety and Tech Development Program

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-WV) today announced that the Marshall University Center for Environmental, Geotechnical & Applied Science has been awarded a \$2 million grant from the US Economic Development Administration (EDA) for development of the Mine Safety Technology Innovation Capability and Regional Business Development program.

"We commend EDA for its investment in this critical mine safety initiative," Rahall said. "This award, along with \$1 million in state funding from Governor Joe Manchin, and another million dollars in private funding, will allow us to move forward so safety in our mines can keep pace with current technologies. This will serve as a solid foundation for miner's safety for generations to come."

The development of a statewide Mine Safety Technology Consortium (MSTC) and creation of the Mine Safety Technology Incubator will be a catalyst to transforming West Virginia coal mining know-how, skills and capability to produce superior coal mine safety and health technology, products and services, including training technologies.

During a four-week period in January and February 2006, sixteen miners were killed in West Virginia coal mines placing even greater emphasis on the need for more dependable mine safety technologies and training. The incubator will allow for the identification of innovative opportunities, develop new business in mine technology services, create a technology clearinghouse database and provide technology transfer services including virtual interactive and mine environment simulation technologies to further enhance training.

"Mine safety and health technologies play a crucial role in the mining industry," Rahall said. "West Virginia is in a unique position, with its significant coal mining expertise, to take the lead in developing the next-generation of technologies and systems to address mine safety and health issues as they relate to the safety of the miner. This program will get us one step closer to making this potential a reality," Rahall said.

"We have a moral obligation to better protect the lives of our coal miners. Many new mining technologies and safety initiatives have been put into place in other countries, and it's time for America to put the safety of our coal miners first and foremost. This project will help to ensure that West Virginia will play a leading role in the discovery and deployment of new technology and training innovations in our mines. It is a win for mine safety and a win for economic development throughout the state,"

U. S. Senator Robert C. Byrd said.

"Deploying new technologies is absolutely critical if we are to make mines in West Virginia and across the country safer. Congressman Rahall's work in landing the grant for the Mine Safety Technology Innovation Capability & Regional Business Development Project will move us closer to making sure that the latest and best technology becomes as much a part of a miner's life as his or her lunch pail," U.S. Senator Jay Rockefeller said.

"The mining tragedies earlier this year drove home the need for new investments in safety and health technologies. Nick Rahall is a respected leader on mining issues in Congress, and his strong support for this effort will surely translate into real results for the workers of our state and nation." U.S. Rep. Alan Mollohan said.

"The establishment of the Mine Safety Technology Consortium represents another major step in West Virginia's efforts to be a national and international leader in the development of innovative safety advancements and new technology that better protects miners in the workplace. The EDA's support of this effort is critical as West Virginia positions itself to move ideas and innovations from the concept to reality, enhancing the safety of workers in the mining industry and creating new economic opportunities throughout the region," Gov. Manchin said. "We appreciate the support of Rep. Rahall and the members of the West Virginia congressional delegation in our continuing efforts to improve mine safety, and we look forward to working with these leaders and our federal partners- such as the EDA and the Mine Safety and Health Administration - as we broaden the focus to make all of our workplaces safer."

"We at Marshall University believe it is critical that we not only respond to the needs of West Virginia's largest industry, but that we also help make the mining workplace safer," said Marshall University President Stephen J. Kopp. "Thanks to the tireless efforts of Congressman Rahall, Marshall University will be part of the solution in developing new mine safety technology that will allow West Virginia miners to be better prepared to meet the increasing energy demands of the United States. Through this private/public partnership, new opportunities will be created for our students to learn more about mining and its strong connection to science, technology, engineering, and math. We have made great strides in developing cutting-edge research at Marshall, and this most recent investment will further this important objective."

"This project provides the state of West Virginia unique opportunity to advance our mine safety technology innovation capability that will improve the working conditions of miners and future economic development of the region. Thanks principally to Congressman Rahall and his deep concern for mine worker safety and the economic future of those areas that have suffered through the downturn of the coal industry over the past couple of decades this proposal has become a project reality," said Dr. Tony Szwiliski, Director of the Center for Environmental, Geotechnical and Applied Science at Marshall University.

Project collaborators include the WVU Institute of Technology-Community and Technical College; Marshall University Center for Environmental, Geotechnical & Applied Sciences; Wheeling Jesuit University-National Technology Transfer Center (NTTC); West Virginia High Technology Consortium (WVHTC); Robert C. Byrd Institute for Advanced Flexible Manufacturing (RCBI); and the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA). The Mine Safety Technology Consortium will be headquartered at the WVU Institute of Technology in Montgomery.

In addition to the \$2 million that the Economic Development Administration has provided, the State of West Virginia, through Governor Joe Manchin has committed \$1 million, \$600,000 was provided by local private investment, including \$100,000 from Arch Minerals, and \$200,000 from State Electric, and \$400,000 of in-kind matches came from all of the project collaborators.